Heritage and Us

conserve it for the future



e-magazine

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Contact

Heritage Conservators
M-124, Second Floor,
Greater Kailash - 2
New Delhi - 110048

http://heritageconservators.net/

Mail us @

heritageandus@gmail.com

Photo on cover:
Gol Gumbad, Lodhi Road, Delhi

EDITORIAL

Dear Friends

This first issue of "Heritage and Us" is an attempt to draw awareness towards conserving and preserving our intangible and tangible cultural heritage. It is a medium to exchange ideas and views with each other and here one can share ones thoughts on any aspect of cultural heritage. I am pleased to inform you that it is open to all.

The present issue features story of a forgotten monument "Bara Lao ka Gumbad" located in south Delhi. The story highlights the effect of time on this monument and also the conservation work done on it.

Another story in the issue showcases a lesser known museum in Delhi "Malliah Memorial Theatre Crafts Museum". This museum is based on the theme of theatre crafts and has an excellent collection but it lacks viewership because of insufficient awareness and shortage of funds.

In every issue we would be including a photo-feature of a monument of India. The present issue includes selective pictures of the monuments of Champaner (Gujarat), a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

As we have mentioned, this platform is for you, it requires your contribution and support. All we have to add is that this is just the beginning and we are still learners.

(Gurpreet Singh)
Editor



Bara Lao ka Gumbad

Bara Lao ka Gumbad
Then and Now

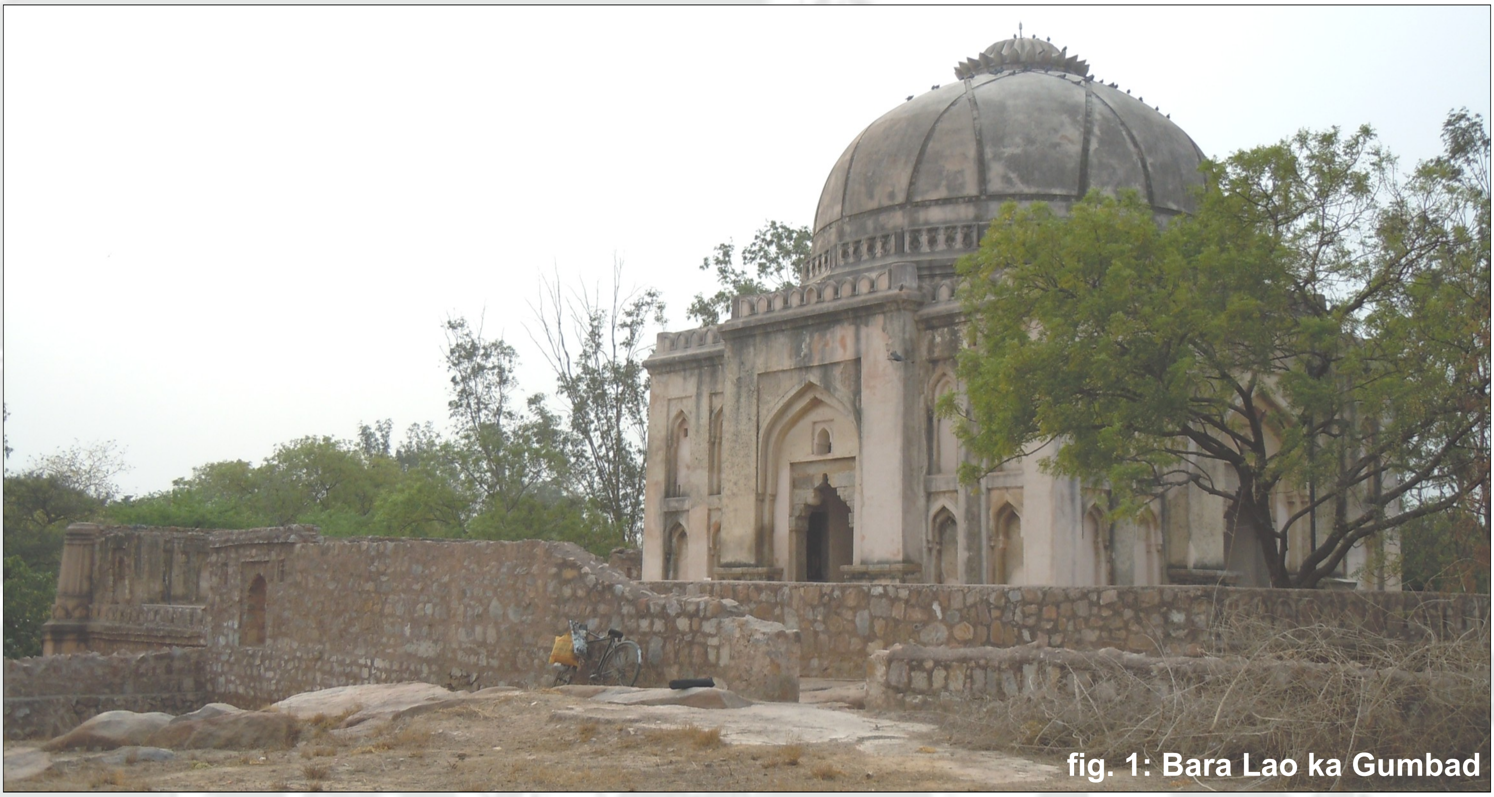


fig. 1: Bara Lao ka Gumbad

The tomb, Bara Lao Ka Gumbad is a Lodi period building located in a DDA park, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi (fig. 1). For years, this monument had been encroached upon and lay in utter neglect. In 2010, this tomb once again sprang to life when the Delhi government took steps to restore it under the project "Protection and Conservation of Monuments".

In the early 1920's, Zafar Hassan, a *Maulavi*, was the first person to have documented this tomb. He also recorded another nearby tomb, Baradari (immediately to the south of the Bara Lao ka Gumbad). At present, the Baradari is completely destroyed (fig. 2).



Baradari (in 1960)



fig. 2: Site of Baradari

Condition of the Tomb: in 2010

The tomb was in bad shape when taken back from encroachers in 2010. The plaster of the building was damaged and the decorative motifs such as medallions, inner intricate designs, etc. were entirely removed (fig. 3 and fig. 4).



fig. 3: Damaged plaster



fig. 4: Damaged medallions

At present, there are no graves inside or outside the tomb as opposed to Zafar Hasan's records of four un-inscribed graves in dilapidated condition (fig. 5). It was also recorded that few other unknown graves existed on the terrace outside the tomb, as well as on a raised platform immediately to its east.

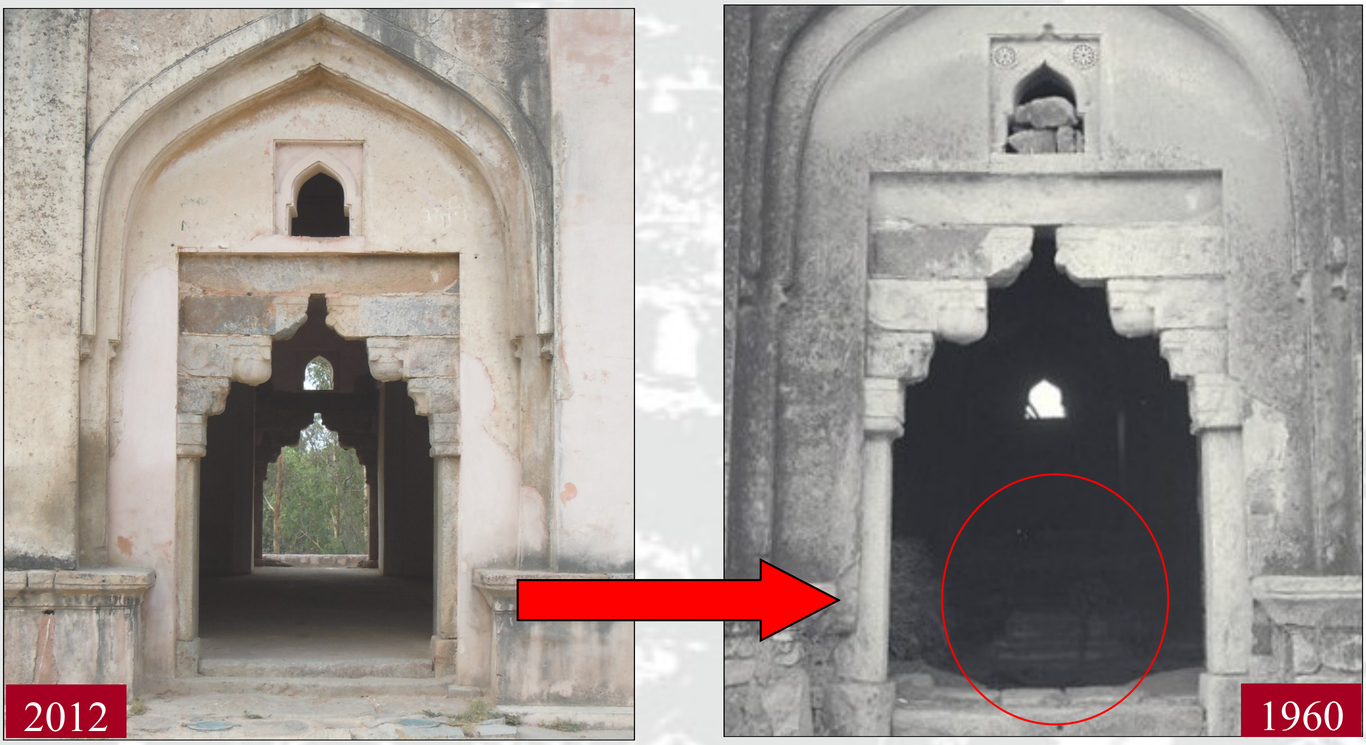


fig. 5: Missing graves from the tomb

Architectural Features

Architecturally, the Bara Lao ka Gumbad is rectangular on plan and measures 32.15x31.54 meters, approximately. The tomb has two levels. The upper level of the tomb is accessed through a passage way and is surrounded by parapet, except on the west side that has the wall mosque which, partially existing, is characterized by arched niches on either sides of the central arched *mihrab*.

Externally, on either side of the arched openings, there are two sets of arched niches set within rectangular panels. The arches are decorated with moldings and small motifs. The central arch has circular medallions in incised plaster on either side. There is also a small arched opening within the arch above each doorway.

The entrance doorways are set within an arch and have stone lintels and brackets forming architraves, one of the characteristics of the Lodi period monuments. The interior is decorated with ornamental small niches and arched niches at either side of each corner with each corner forming a squinch arch, with help of which the square plan becomes an octagon and then to sixteen side.

The drum is decorated with *kangura* pattern. There are marks of glazed blue tiles in the space between each *kangura* pattern at the drum level. Decorative minarets marked the angles of the drum, which does not exist anymore. Externally, the dome has cross bands, originally decorated with blue tiles (fig. 6).

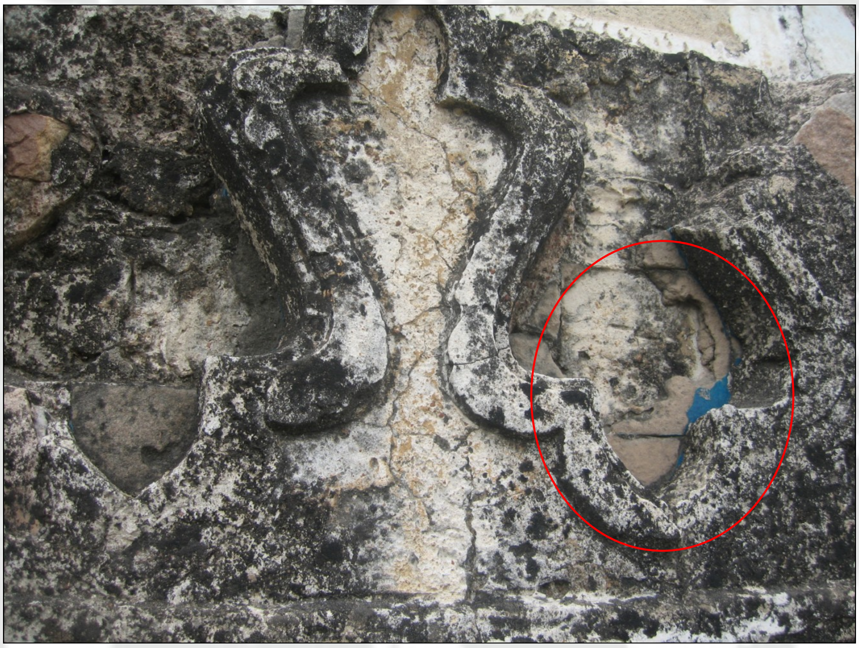


fig. 6: Evidence of blue tile work

Conservation Work

Our team thoroughly examined this monument and carried out necessary conservation work that includes (fig. 7 and 8) -

a) Removal of structural additions made by encroachers such as brick walls, partitions, etc.;
b) Walls re-plastered with lime;
c) Restoration of available decorative motifs such as *kangoora* pattern, incised plasterwork, mouldings, etc.;
d) Restoration of dome and arches;
e) Coping on walls.





fig. 7: Bara Lao ka Gumbad (during conservation)



fig. 8: Bara Lao ka Gumbad (after completion)

Monuments are integral part of our heritage. It is our collective responsibility to save and conserve them for posterity.

A nation without an idea of history is like a person without a memory...
- David Hackett Fischer

- by Gurpreet Singh

(source of old photographs: British Library, London)



Malliah Memorial Theatre Crafts Museum

Malliah Memorial Theatre Crafts Museum

The museum of Malliah Memorial Theatre Crafts (MMTCM) is located at Kamaladevi Bhawan on the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg in Delhi. The museum was established in 1980-81 by the Malliah Memorial Theatre Crafts Trust under the direction of Late Smt. Kamaladevi Chhatopadhyaya, a freedom fighter. It was opened in commemoration of Sh. Srinivas Malliah, a patriot and a visionary, who was highly interested in conserving Indian cultural traditions.

As its name suggest the museum has an excellent theatre crafts collection from different regions of India. It includes rare collections of puppets, theatre costumes, masks, ornaments of metals, wood, shells, etc.

The museum has three galleries. The first gallery, on the theme of theatre costumes, is located on the ground floor. The collection includes traditional dresses or costumes of different classical dances and theatre performances.



View of the gallery (courtesy: MMTCM)

This gallery displays costumes and ornaments worn by famous theatre and dance artists from various states of India. Noteworthy displays in this collection are costumes for Manipuri *Ras* and dance drama; *kathakali* performance; and Bhuta and *theyyam* dances of Karnataka and Kerala. The gallery also displays the life story of Smt. Kamaladevi Chhatopadhyay along with some excerpts from the Kamaladevi memoirs in which she talked about Sh. Srinivas Malliah.



View of the gallery (courtesy: MMTCM)



Mask (courtesy: MMTCM)

The second gallery named as 'puppet gallery' showcases a wide variety of puppets collected from all over India. It includes string puppets which were popular in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu; rod puppets (*Putul Nach*), popular in West Bengal; glove puppets, popular in Kerala, Orissa and Tamil Nadu; and leather puppets used in shadow plays which were popular in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa and Tamil Nadu.



String puppet (courtesy: MMTCM)

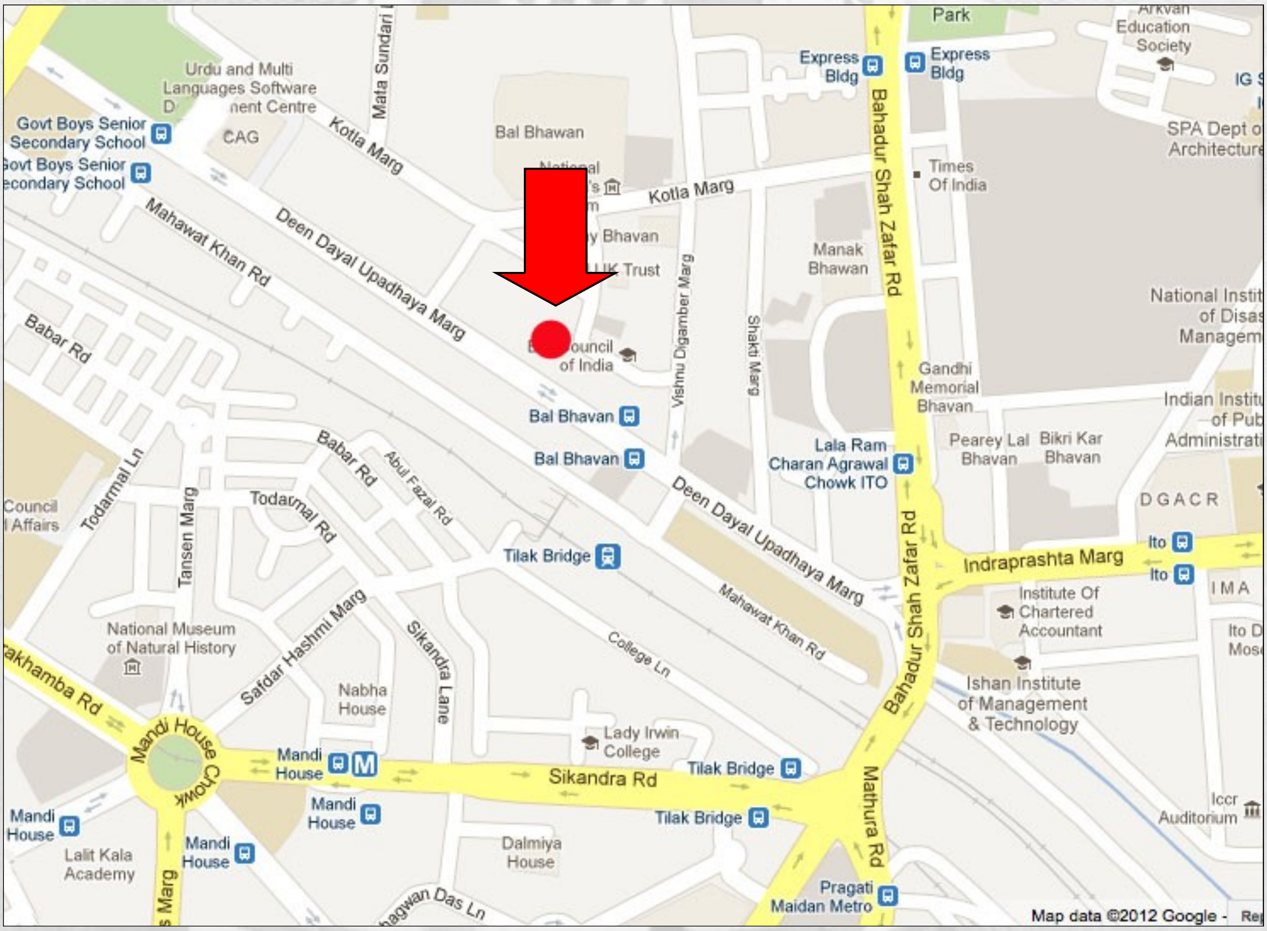
The third gallery is based on the theme of masks and thus named the 'mask gallery'. This gallery displays more than 300 different masks. These masks are made up of different materials such as wood, papier-mâché, metal sheets, and cloth. Today, a number of these masks are no longer made.

The museum has an interesting collection of theatre crafts but it lacks viewer-ship in the absence of insufficient funds. Even though the museum is situated at a prominent place but remains a place singularly less traveled to.

Star attractions

* Glove puppets in the puppet gallery
* Mask Gallery having collection of over 300 masks
* Museum has a workshop where one can order for masks and sculptures

Timings - 1000 hrs to 1700 hrs
Entry - Free
Permission required - photography and videography
Closed on - Sunday and on all the gazetted holidays



Location of the museum

- Team Heritage and Us

Champaner-pavagarh group of monuments was declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004. The Pavagarh, a small hillock composed of ancient temples while Champaner has mosques, fortifications and other monuments. The architectural beauty of the monuments of Champaner is mesmerising. Minute stone carvings and intricate designs on the buildings are breathtaking.



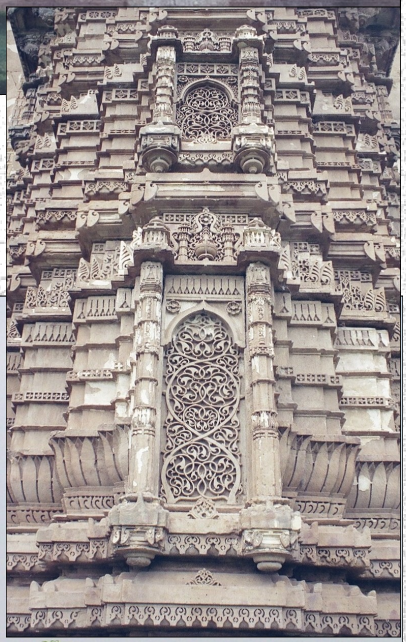
Champaner, Gujarat: Kabutar khana



Champaner, Gujarat: Intricately carved window of Kabutar khana



Champaner, Gujarat: Jami Masjid





Champaner, Gujarat: Courtyard of the Jami Masjid



Champaner, Gujarat: Sahar ki Masjid



Champaner, Gujarat: Seven arches

Photos: Delhi Institute of Heritage Research and Management, 2008

Forth-coming Events

Exhibitions

Monumental Glory of India
Organisers: Archaeological Survey of India
Opening date: 3rd August, 2012
Venue: Guards Quarters Building, Red Fort, Delhi
For further information: Director (Museum), Archaeological Survey of India

Calligraphic Art of India
Organisers: Archaeological Survey of India
Opening date: 28th September, 2012
Venues: Delhi, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Nagpur and Mysore
For further information: Director (Epigraphy), Archaeological Survey of India

Workshops

Structural Conservation and Safety of Monuments
Organisers: Archaeological Survey of India and IIT, Chennai
Date(s): 23rd-25th August, 2012
Venue: Chennai
For further information: Chennai Circle, Archaeological Survey of India

Heritage Understanding
Organisers: INTACH
Date(s): 6th-8th September, 2012
Venue: Delhi
For Further information: INTACH Division - info.icctcb@gmail.com

Be a volunteer

Take a pledge with us to conserve and preserve our cultural heritage. Come forward to aware people about the riches of the past. Do something for your nation. Become a volunteer and we together would form a dynamic group of young heritage conservators.

You may write us at heritage.conservators@gmail.com

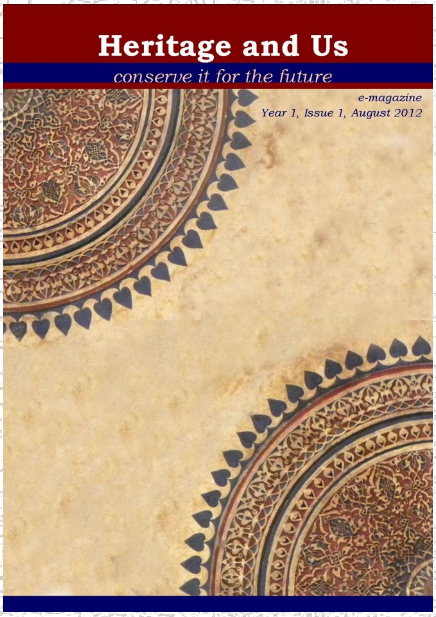
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- interests
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- recent conservation/ preservation works
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